

from 0.1 to 5 wt % of metal oxide solid particles,
provided that the total amount of the silicon nitride particles, the pore-forming agent and the metal oxide particles is at least 90 wt %, to form a porous product.

9. (Twice Amended) A method for producing a silicon nitride filter, which comprises:

heat-treating in an atmosphere containing substantially only nitrogen to one that contains no oxygen a green body comprising:

from 45 to 85 wt % of silicon nitride particles having an average particle diameter of from 1 to 30 μ m,

from 10 to 50 wt % of metal oxide hollow particles and

from 0.1 to 5 wt % of metal oxide solid particles,

provided that the total amount of the silicon nitride particles, the metal oxide hollow particles and the metal oxide solid particles is at least 90 wt %, to form a porous product.--

Please add the following new claims.

--16. (New) The method for producing a silicon nitride filter according to Claim 1, wherein the organic polymer pore-forming agent is polyvinyl alcohol, an acrylic resin, a vinyl acetate resin or cellulose.

17. (New) The method for producing a silicon nitride filter according to Claim 1, wherein the content of the organic polymer pore-forming agent ranges from 15 to 40 wt %.

18. (New) The method for producing a silicon nitride filter according to Claim 9, wherein the metal oxide hollow particles have a porosity of at least 30 %.

19. (New) The method for producing a silicon nitride filter according to Claim 9, wherein the metal oxide hollow particles have a porosity of 40 to 80 %.--